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ABSTRACT

The state of vocational education and training (VET) in Moldova was examined. The study focused on the following topics: Moldova's socioeconomic conditions; Moldova's labor market; governance of VET; Moldova's VET system; and anticipation of skill needs and standards. Selected findings were as follows: (1) the educational share of state expenditures has decreased marginally, and average wages in the education sector were comparatively low; (2) training is important for small business development because Moldova has no entrepreneurial tradition or experience; (3) because of the trend toward increased emigration for temporary employment, many areas have experienced a constant demand for VET for jobs in construction, health care, or housekeeping, despite the lack of a local demand for workers in those occupations; (4) Moldova's VET system, which includes schools of trade and versatile vocational education schools, which differ in terms of their orientation and quality, and private and public continuing VET providers, needs better coordination; and (5) Moldova has had little experience in anticipating skill needs and developing training standards, and international assistance is needed in both areas. (The following items are appended: an overview of donor activities in VET; a list of acronyms and abbreviations and glossary; addresses of major organizations; and lists of 10 references and in-depth studies and recent VET-related legislation.) (MN)

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National Observatory of Moldova

Vocational education and training in Moldova 2002

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National Observatory report on vocational education and training in Moldova

Chisinau - 2002

Introduction

Executive summary

This report contains a condensed description of the present state of vocational education and training in Moldova, an analysis of its main challenges and the main changes after 1998.

Following the first report on the vocational education and training system of the Republic of Moldova in 1998, the country has seen major changes in the system and gained more experience in the promotion of vocational education and training reform. The reform was helped substantially by the Tacis-supported project, "Reform of the vocational education and training system of Moldova".

However, in the past two years state financial support for vocational education and training has clearly declined. It is thus important to continue decentralising vocational education and ensure that it serves the real needs of the labour market. Schemes for financing and planning vocational education and training through involving other social partners and potential beneficiaries should be explored.

The central public authorities, particularly the Ministry of Education, should focus on increasing the accessibility of vocational education and training so that all *gymnasium* leavers have the opportunity to continue their education in general education or vocational education and training. It is crucial that local opportunities are developed to pre-empt the education-related migration of young people in the country.

The Ministry of Education should play a greater role in the development and implementation of educational and training standards. A current major task is to find an optimal relationship between general education and vocational education and training in the versatile vocational education and training school curriculum. The experience gained so far indicates that some revisions are necessary in the vocational education and training structure. It is likely that the "three steps" of versatile vocational schools currently in operation will be reconsidered, particularly the general education component after Step I.

The fulfilment of the tasks mentioned above depends on the availability of proper scientific support such as research on vocational education and training. The Education Ministry should support and promote such research. For example, specialised higher educational institutions - primarily the Technical University and Agrarian University - could have a much greater role in research on vocational education and training.

Given the necessary changes in vocational education and training it would be reasonable to continue promoting the law on vocational education and training as developed in the Tacis-supported project "Reform of the vocational education and training system of Moldova".

Authors' preface

This report on vocational education and training reform was produced by the National Observatory of Moldova with the support of the European Training Foundation. The National Observatory of Moldova is located in the Ministry of Education. It is supported by the European Training Foundation and is part of an international network of similar institutions in Central and Eastern European countries and in the New Independent States and Mongolia.

The National Observatory established a network of local experts to provide accurate and current information on the reform's progress. The experts comprise representatives from government institutions, educationists, statisticians, labour economists and representatives of social partners among others.

Statistical data were mostly from the Department of Statistics and Sociology and operational data from the Ministries of Education and Labour and Social Protection.

The content of the present report was discussed with and approved by the members of the Steering Committee, representing the country's various government bodies.

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Chapter 1. Socio-economic background

1.1 *Economic development*

In 2000-2001 Moldova's economy recovered from the knock-on effects of the 1998 Russian fiscal crisis. Following the decline of almost all sectors and a decrease in gross domestic product in 1998 and 1999, the year 2000 was marked by a slight increase in gross domestic product (102.0 per cent compared to the previous year), a trend confirmed by the 2001 preliminary results (106.1 per cent compared to 2000).

Table 1: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP per capita)

	1998	1999	2000
GDP - million lei - current prices	9122.1	12204.0	15979.5
GDP % compared to previous year	93.5	95.6	102.0
Agriculture %	25.7	22.3	21.7
Industry %	16.7	16.2	16.0
Services %	42.2	50.5	51.0
Taxes from import/export and other activities %	15.4	11.0	11.3
GDP per capita (US$-current prices)	444.0	311.9	336.5

Source: Department of Statistics and Sociology

The educational share of state expenditure decreased marginally in the past three years (see Table 2 and Fig.1) from 21.17 per cent in 1998 to 17.94 per cent for 2000. This trend is also implied in the wage dynamics of the educational sector (see Table 3 and Fig.2). However, the more crucial factor is the comparatively lower wages in education against the average wage of other sectors of the national economy. Even allowing for some increase in finance from the private sector (for example, from the Parents' Associations Funds, Education Contract Fees in private or state institutions), education receives less financial support from the state each year.

Table 2: Selected state budget expenditure

	1998		1999			2000
	projected	actual	projected	rectified	actual	projected
Expenditure, total-million lei	***3300.0***	***3027.1***	***3100.0***	***3677.4***	***3495.3***	***4175.0***
Of which (as % of total expenditure):						
General state services	2.58	4.83	3.00	4.80	6.39	5.76
Foreign activity	1.06	1.22	1.42	0.12	1.64	1.92
National defence	1.82	1.88	1.61	1.72	1.81	1.53
Public order & national security	6.06	6.73	5.24	5.19	5.99	5.90
Education	**21.80**	**21.17**	**19.81**	**18.38**	**16.43**	**17.94**
Culture, arts, religion, sports	2.35	2.68	1.62	1.76	1.77	1.67
Health care	15.31	12.97	13.06	12.05	10.23	10.70
Social security and support	16.72	11.94	16.19	15.54	13.35	12.74
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	2.35	3.07	3.79	3.97	3.92	3.39
Public debt service	13.64	13.91	22.29	24.99	24.80	27.45
Capital investments	5.45	6.79	2.10	2.63	2.97	2.62
Others	10.86	12.81	9.86	8.86	10.70	8.37

Source: Ministry of Finance

Fig. 1: Public expenditures on education - % of total expenditure, 1999-2000

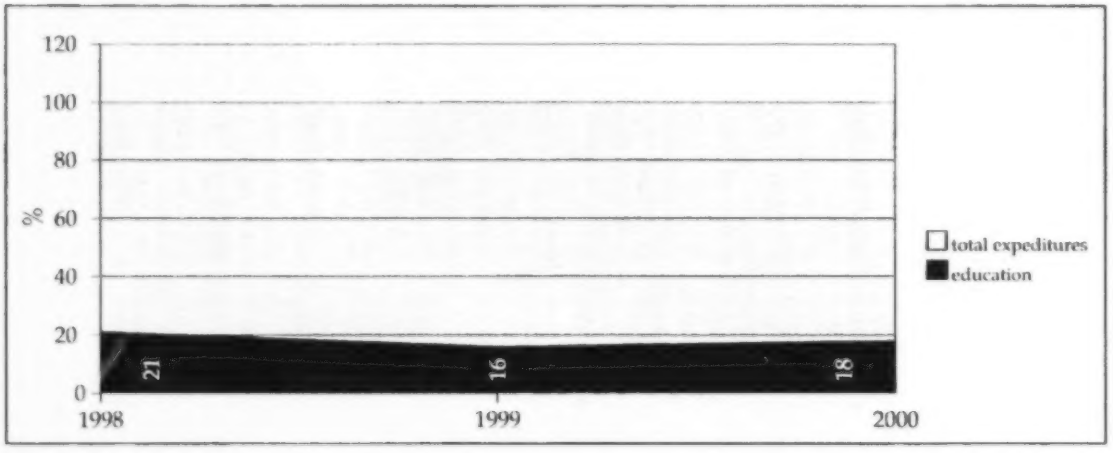

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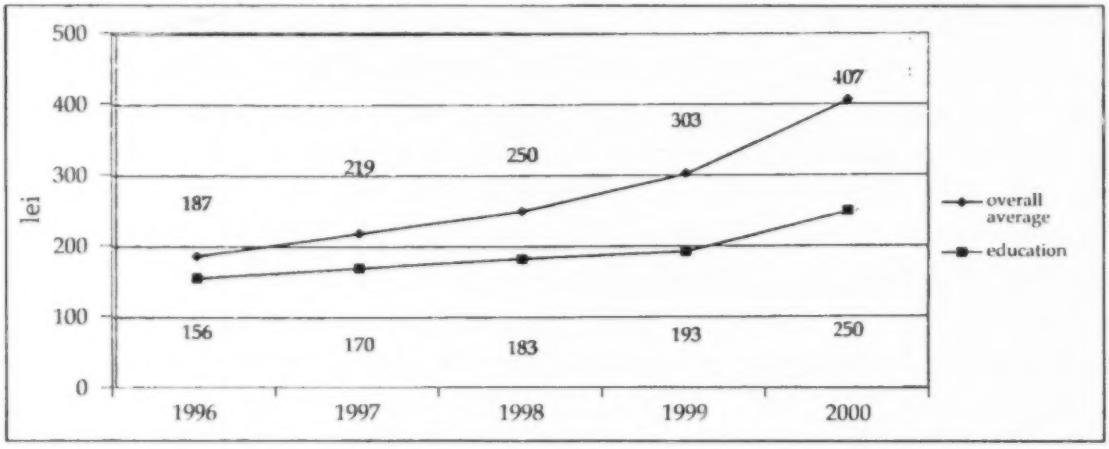
Table 3: Average wages (lei) in the economy

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Overall average	187.1	219.8	250.4	303.4	407.0
Agriculture	121.5	135.2	140.6	166.7	243.7
Manufacturing industry	297.7	373.2	420.8	516.1	693.8
Financial activity	678.0	823.5	1135.4	1672.8	2355.4
State administration	295.5	327.2	390.3	440.3	516.8
Education (lei)	156.7	170.9	183.0	193.5	250.3
as % of the overall average	*84.0*	*78.0*	*73.0*	*64.0*	*61.5*

Source: Department of Statistics and Sociology

Fig. 2: Average wage and wages in education, 1996-2000



The purpose of the 1997-1998 privatisation programme which included the year 2000 was to allow for the continuity of two previous programmes (1993-1994 and 1995-1996). The programme called for the privatisation of 1,042 enterprises (of which 823 are state enterprises and joint companies, 39 to be privatised in conformity with individual plans to be adopted by Parliament and 180 unfinished constructions). Privatisation of state property yielded 1,764 million lei in 1999. The total number of enterprises privatised between 1993 and 1999 is about 2100. About 120 enterprises were earmarked for privatisation on the same principle in the year 2000.

The privatisation programme in 1999-2000 encountered problems that slowed down the process. The most common problems were the workers' withholding of documents necessary for privatisation and the extremely poor financial condition of many companies to be privatised including their debts.

The effectiveness of privatisation can only be judged by whether it leads to improved economic performances. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Moldova as privatisation achieved neither its economic nor social objectives.

Private sector share of the gross domestic product reached 51.4 per cent in 1999. However, the private sector did not improve productivity, efficiency or competitiveness in the national economy. Privatisation did not avert economic decline and the impoverishment of the population continues.

Privatised enterprises have also made little effort at restructuring their activities to increase competitiveness and attract new investors.

The authors of this report feel that for privatisation to be effective, it should be accompanied by adequate education and training. This should cover all areas of management, new information and communication technology, and modern languages which are important for the market economy. For example, poor negotiation skills were responsible for the sale of some important industrial enterprises to competitors whose only interest was in eliminating potential competition.

With regard to small and medium businesses, the development of entrepreneurial activities showed a positive trend in 1999 with the registration of 6,263 new economic agents and the cessation of only 959 agents. This was fuelled by an increase (3.7 per cent) in private enterprises. Official data for 1999 listed almost 194,000 economic agents. The following table shows the distribution of the economic units:

Table 3a: Distribution of economic units according to their legal status

Type of economic unit	Share in the total-%-
Individual enterprises	30.0
Peasant farms	48.0
Joint stock companies	3.5
Limited liability societies	15.0
State companies	0.8
Municipal companies	0.1
Non-commercial institutions and organisations	about 2.0

The small business sector employs approximately 20 per cent of the labour force and they are responsible for 45 per cent of all sales.

A state programme to support small businesses was adopted for 1999-2000. It was aimed at improving existing legislation, developing infrastructure, simplifying access to financial, material and informational resources, etc. Regional programmes were adopted in most of the counties. Associations of mutual financial support have been organised in rural areas in co-operation with the World Bank which opened a special credit line. There are more than 11,000 members of such associations and, by 1999, loans amounted to 17 million lei.

Despite the increased economic efficiency of small businesses, this sector still requires attention as funding from the Small Business Support and Development Fund has ended. The Ministry of Finance has no plans to support this sector. Many registered enterprises have been held back because they do not have the initial capital. Due to exarcebated taxes many of the enterprises have been declared bankrupt or have switched to the informal economy.

Training is an important resource for the development of small businesses since Moldova has no entrepreneurial tradition or experience. The potential effectiveness of business training depends on the local economic situation particularly in rural areas. There are a great number of self-employed individuals and subsistence families who could be in the small business development sector. If they are able to have training involving some formal knowledge and practical experience they could legalise their activities and benefit from additional opportunities available in the official economy. Creating a national network of institution-based training providers could be a solution for the legalisation of a significant part of the informal economy.

Foreign investment. The total volume of foreign investments in Moldova from 1990 to 1999 was about $300 million. The number of enterprises with foreign capital participation increased from 1,535 in 1998 to 1,874 in 1999. Approximately one-third are foreign-owned companies. Most of these enterprises - about 1,350 companies - are involved in trade. Another 200 companies are in the manufacturing industry. Most investments flowing into the country in the first quarter of 2000 were from the United States of America (over $3 million), France ($1.5 million), Greece ($0.8 million) and Romania ($0.8 million).

This level of foreign investment in Moldova is too low for successful economic development. It is low when compared to Central and Eastern European countries and many of the New Independent States. The main reason for the low foreign investment is the continuing political instability in the country and inadequate legislation. The latter would have to be improved to secure foreign investment as Moldova is considered a high risk country for investments. And this is not helped by the limited information on business opportunities available to foreign investors. To overcome this obstacle the National Agency for Investments was created. However, it is too early to consider the effectiveness of this institution.

The state perception of the national labour force as having a "high level of education" is in fact unhelpful. Even if this is accurate, it is still inadequate if not inappropriate for the current needs of the country. The main feature of the market economy as opposed to the former socialist economy is unprecedented instability. We need a more pragmatic approach to education and training. New skills are required and old skills need updating. There is also a significant imbalance between the number of students in higher education which increased sharply in the last ten years and the number of trainees in vocational education and training institutions which dropped markedly over the same period. As can be expected this has not fed the increase in the labour force needed for industries. Industries need to be attractive to investors and only a reformed vocational education and training can provide the change.

1.2 *Demography*

Excluding the Transdniestrian territory, the population of Moldova was estimated in 2000 at 3,645,000. About 700,000 people live in the Transdniestrian region - on the Eastern bank of Dniestr River including the right-bank city of Tighina) - which is controlled by the Russian military. Moldova's rural population at 54 per cent is marginally higher than its urban population.

Anecho of World War II and famine in 1946-47 and negative changes in the economic situation of the country led to the population continuing to decrease over the last few years. In 2000, the country's birth rate fell to 10.1 per 1,000 and the mortality rate was 11.3 per 1,000.

Table 4: Population dynamics in Moldova (including Transdniestrian region)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Crude birth rate per 1000	12.0	11.9	10.9	10.6	10.1
Crude death rate per 1000	11.5	11.9	11.2	11.3	11.3
Population (million people)	4.334	4.320	4.304	4.293	4.282

Migration has influenced population growth and ethnic composition for a long time. Population growth during the Soviet period was caused by the in-flow of workers from other regions of the Soviet Union. Moldova's official language is Romanian (but called "Moldovan" in the country's constitution). Russian is the second language for most people. In some parts of the country

Ukrainian, Gagauz and Bulgarian are spoken. The Romanian-speaking Moldovans comprise 65 per cent of the population. Other significant ethnic groups are the Ukrainians (14 per cent), Russians (13 per cent), Gagauz (3.5 per cent) and Bulgarians (2.5 per cent). The introduction of Romanian as the official language was difficult for the ethnic minority groups as most of them do not have an adequate command of the language.

In the last decade the migration flow has reversed. The early years following Moldova's declaration of independence saw a heavy migration of the highly qualified labour force to Russia. The number of migrants per year then was about 28,000 but by 1998 it had dropped markedly to 3,000 a year.

Meanwhile, a new form of migration has appeared. As a result of the democratisation of legislation and transparency of state borders temporary migration for employment has become very popular. According to some estimates the number of temporary emigrants (legal and illegal) to countries such as Russia, Romania, Israel, Greece, Italy, Portugal, United States of America, Germany, Hungary, etc, may be close to 600,000.

This phenomenon has some effect on vocational education and training. For example, while there is no local demand for workers in jobs related to construction, health care or housekeeping there is a constant demand for training in these areas, mainly in the form of short-term courses for adults.

Table 5: Distribution of population by age groups and gender as at 1st September 1999 (thousand people)

Total population: 3,650,000 inhabitants (excluding Transdniestrian region)

	M	F
0-4 years	117	111
5-9 years	156	149
10-14 years	186	181
15-19 years	165	171
20-24 years	154	147
25-29 years	117	119
30-34 years	114	119
35-39 years	140	151
40-44 years	138	148
45-49 years	127	140
50-54 years	64	76
55-59 years	72	90
60-64 years	68	89
65-69 years	54	78
70-74 years	39	65
75-79 years	24	42
80-84 years	8	17
85 years and over	4	10

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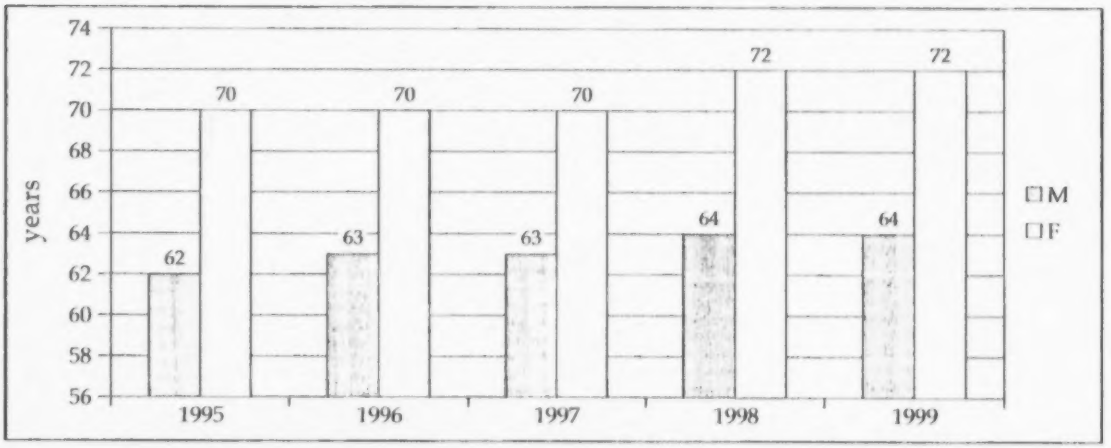
Table 6: Life expectancy of the population (years)

	Gender	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Life expectation	M	61.8	62.9	62.9	64.3	64.2
	F	69.7	70.4	70.3	71.5	71.5

Fig. 3: Life expectancy of the population



The National Strategy of Sustainable Development "Moldova 21" published by the United Nations Development Programme gives the evolution of the Human Development Index (HDI) in the past few years. The index is based on three factors: longevity (life expectancy at birth), educational attainment and standard of living (real Gross Domestic Product per capita). Out of 174 countries, Moldova in 1999 was placed at 104 (in 1998 it was 113). This is a medium development level. If former Soviet Union countries are considered, only Tajikistan has a lower position. Moldova's neighbours - Romania and Ukraine - are placed at 68 and 91 respectively.

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Chapter 2. Labour market

2.1 *Labour market background*

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Republic of Moldova's transition to a market economy ten years ago resulted in a sharp economic decline for Moldova accompanied by unprecedented massive redundancies. With the support of the Tacis programme, a national system of labour offices under the Department of Employment was created. Some equipment was obtained and staff provided with training to run these labour offices.

Labour resources are unevenly distributed in Moldova - geographically and within economic zones. About 35 per cent of labour resources are concentrated in four municipalities (Kishinev, Tiraspol, Balti, Bender) with the rest spread throughout the country. Even within the economic zones (South, Central, and North) distribution of labour resources is uneven as the Central and North areas are more densely populated.

2.2 *Employment*

Data from the 2000 Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) provide the following information:

Active population - 45.4 per cent of total population.

Employed population - 41.5 per cent of the total population

% of which:

Live in rural areas	60.3
Deal with agriculture	42.8
Are self employed or employed in family farms approximately	21.0
Women represent	50.1
Employed in the public sector	34.7
Employed in the private sector	60.1
with the following breakdown:	
in agriculture	67.6
in retail	1.3
in manufacturing	9.7

Employment policy in Moldova is the responsibility of the Department of Labour Force Utilisation (or Department of Employment) which comes under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. With the support of the Tacis programme a national network of labour offices was created. This network has been re-organised to conform with Moldova's local government structure.

Passive and active measures of combating unemployment are in effect. The respective costs are borne by the state budget through the Social Fund of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Active measures include state-funded vocational guidance, training, and retraining courses. The number of those registered as unemployed in 1999 who were trained or retrained in that year was 7,300 (12.6 per cent). Some 840 unemployed people were involved paid temporary public works. One-third of those registered unemployed found a job. Vocational guidance is also offered by a number of private companies which charge customers a fee for the service.

The main passive measure is financial support for the unemployed. However, compared to the developed countries, this assistance is so meagre that it partly explains the low level of the official unemployment registration. Many of the unemployed do not bother to register since the amount they are entitled makes little difference to their needs. In 1999 the average financial payment to 25,300 unemployed from the state was only 101 lei (about US$8) per month.

Labour mobility in Moldova depends on the level of initial education and training. It is common for university graduates to be flexible in accepting a job. Many with university diplomas are in modest positions such as vendors in the market place, housemaids in hotels, etc., where lower qualifications would have been adequate. However, those with secondary education (general or vocational) are much more vulnerable and less flexible. Those under 15 years of age are even less likely to get work as it is illegal to employ them.

Re-distribution of the labour force between different economic sectors continues. However, there is no reliable or full information about employment. Data provided by the Department of Statistics and Sociology are gathered only from those firms employing 20 or more employees. As a significant part of the labour force is employed in small businesses with less than 20 employees, an accurate assessment of the labour force in the various economic sectors would differ from Table 7 below.

Estimates provided by the Ministry of Labour suggest that agriculture is still the principal activity in the country. The reduced employment reflects the restructuring of agriculture in favour of small family farms. This fact is, however, not reflected in the official data on employment. There are also no official data on Moldovan citizens who are temporarily employed abroad. As mentioned, they are likely to form a significant number.

Table 7: Number and structure of employees by principal branches of economy

	Number of employees		
	1998	1999	2000
Total (thousand people)	**1033.2**	**849.4**	**713.8**
-of which (% of the total):			
Agriculture, hunting and related services	39.80	33.28	27.04
Manufacturing industry	12.11	12.82	13.63
Electric energy, gas & water supply	2.20	2.63	2.47
Construction	2.88	3.03	3.04
Wholesale and retail trade	3.93	4.36	5.02
Transport, warehousing & communications	5.45	5.99	6.67
Financial activity	0.78	0.84	0.78

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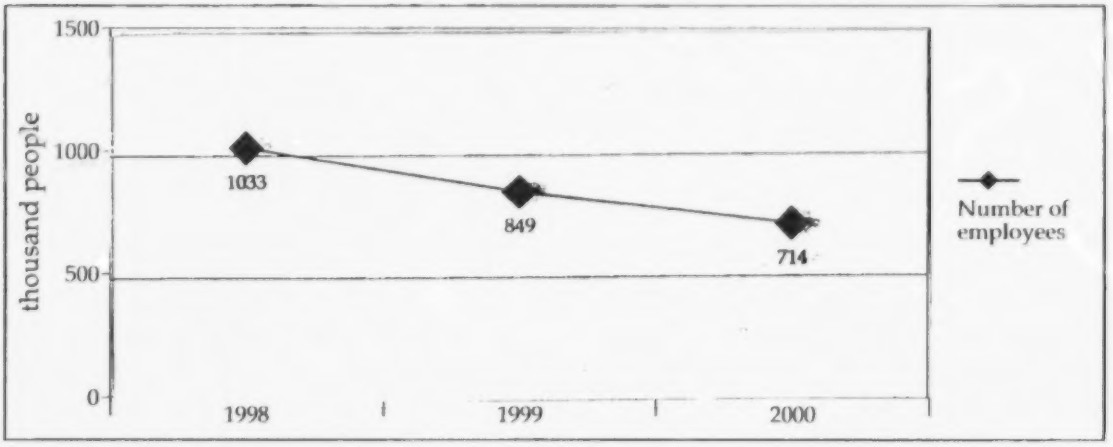
	Number of employees		
	1998	1999	2000
Real estate activity	2.70	3.24	3.70
State administration	5.03	5.76	6.93
Education	13.79	15.72	17.57
Health & social services	8.39	9.29	9.71

Source: Department of Statistics and Sociology
Note: The data reflect only firms with more than 20 employees

Fig. 4: Number of employees (firms with more than 20 employees), 1998-2000



2.3 *Unemployment*

Until 1998 unemployment data in Moldova did not conform with international standards. In the initial years of the transition the labour market in Moldova was affected by hidden (technical) unemployment including compulsory unpaid leave, reduced employment, low wages and low qualification levels of employees. As such there was an obvious discrepancy between official data on unemployment and the real situation.

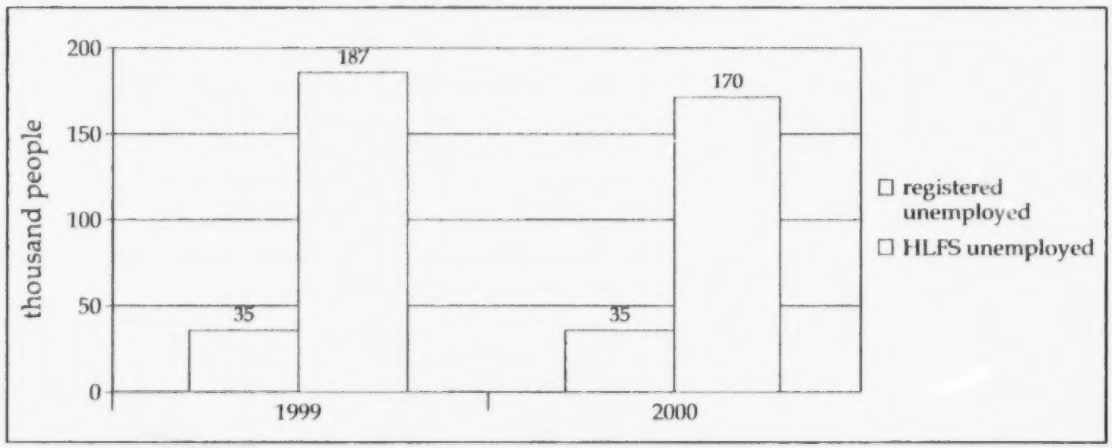
However with financial support from the World Bank and technical support from Romanian experts the Department of Statistics and Sociology has implemented a new methodology for more accurate assessment of this social phenomenon. A pilot Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) was conducted in May 1998 and from October 1998 quarterly HLFS based on International Labour Organisation definitions were conducted. Data obtained from these surveys give a more accurate picture of employment and unemployment in Moldova.

Table 8: Registered unemployment and unemployment by Household Labour Force Survey

	Number of unemployed thousand people		Unemployment rate %	
	Registered	HLFS	Registered	HLFS
2000	34.9	169.6	2.2%	8.5
1999	34.9	187.2	2.0	11.1

Source: Operational data of Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

Fig. 5: Number of unemployed (1999-2000) - registered and Household Labour Force Survey



Figures on registered unemployment (Table 9) give a relatively even distribution by ages. But data obtained from the Household Labour Force Survey (Table 9a and Fig. 6) for the same period reveal a much higher level of unemployment among young people.

Table 9: Population and registered unemployment rate by age groups in 1999

	16-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60-64 years	Total
Population, people	863000*	524000	553000	302000	157000	2399000
Unemployment rate, %	2.7	2.9	2.6	1.5	.1	2.0

**) Includes 15 year olds in total population*
Source: Data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

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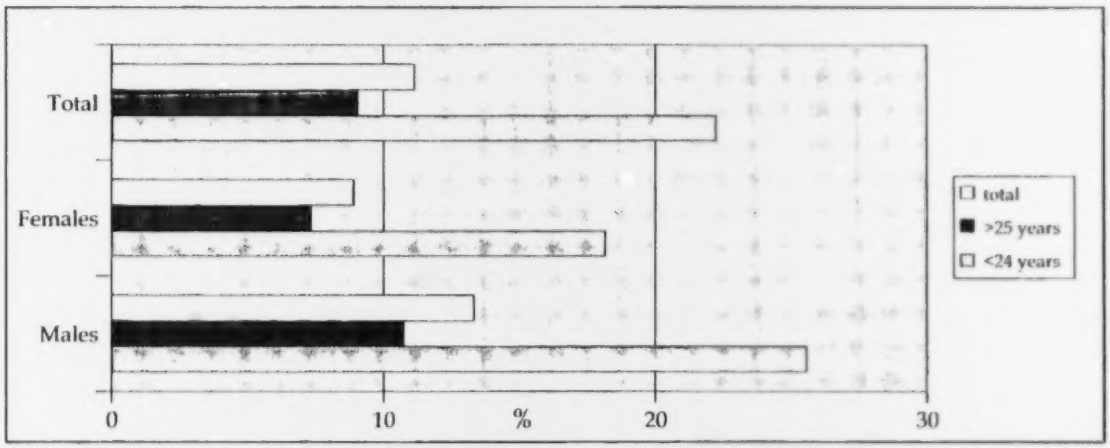
Table 9a: Structure of unemployment by gender and age groups in 1999 – Household Labour Force Survey

	Number of unemployed			Unemployment rate -%		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
24 years	37866	21597	59463	25.60	18.14	22.28
25 years	75732	52036	127768	10.75	7.33	9.03
Total	**113598**	**73633**	**187231**	**13.32**	**8.88**	**11.13**

Source: Department Of Statistics And Sociology

Fig. 6: Unemployment rate (Household Labour Force Survey 1999) by age groups and by gender



The high level of unemployment among young people is confirmed in Table 10 and Figure 7 where unemployment rate by educational attainment and age groups is presented. As can be seen for all three educational attainment categories the level of unemployment is higher for the age group 25-29. Note that the lowest level of unemployment is the group with the lowest educational attainment.

This can be explained by the influence of "the stabilising factor of underdeveloped agriculture". The largest part of the active population with the lowest educational attainment lives in rural areas and is involved in the agricultural sector being self-employed or employed in family farms.

Table 10: Household Labour Force Survey - Unemployment rate (%) by educational attainment and age groups in 1999

	ISCED level 0-2	ISCED level 3	ISCED level 5-7
25-29 years	12.80	13.80	12.40
30-39 years	8.00	11.90	10.30
40-49 years	7.10	9.40	9.60
50-59 years	3.70	6.10	8.30
25-59 years	6.60	10.50	10.00

Source: Department of Statistics And Sociology

Fig. 7: Household Labour Force Survey1999 - unemployment rate by age groups and educational attainment

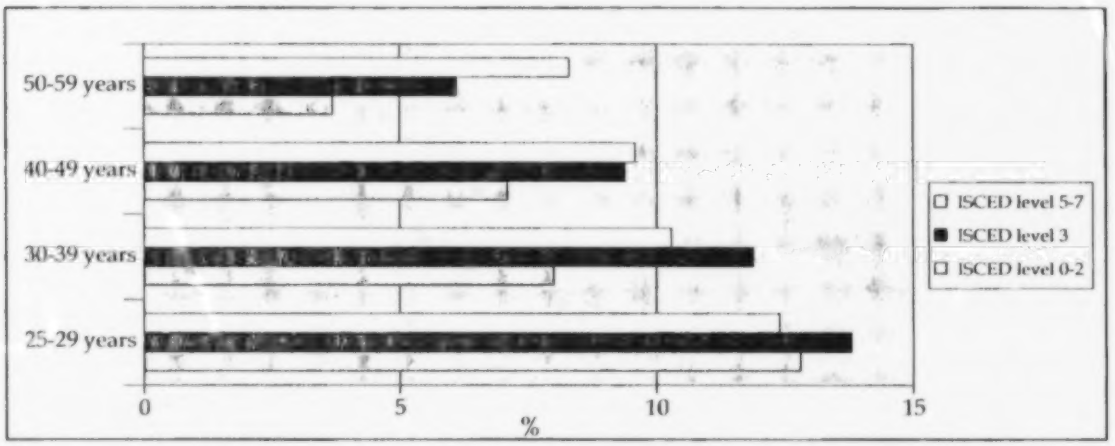


Table 11 shows the duration of unemployment. As can be seen women are in a less favourable position to men. Long-term unemployment (more than 1 year) affected some 19.5 per cent of total unemployed registered in 1999.

Table 11: Structure of registered unemployed by duration of unemployment in 1999

	Total	Women-% of registered unemployed
Total	54937 people	53.21
Less than 6 months (%)	52.71	25.59
From 6 months to1 year (%)	27.82	15.60
More than 1 year (%)	19.47	12.02

Source: Data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

Chapter 3. The governance of vocational education and training

3.1 *Vocational education and training policy and legislation*

The state policy for education, declared by law a national priority, encompasses the fundamental objectives of education. In general these are equal opportunities in education for all, education in human rights, a range of vocational qualifications to suit current and future labour market needs, and contribution to the personal development of the students.

Vocational education and training is a component of the educational system of Moldova. Its aim is to train the labour force for all branches of the national economy.

Prior to the educational reform in the country vocational education and training followed the system in the then Soviet Union. Until 1990 it functioned as a single system where state policy and strategy were highly centralised. Vocational education and training was organised in 115 vocational education and training schools for 64,000 students including those in Transdniestria.

Every vocational education and training school then was attached to the respective specialised ministry and to the economic enterprises of the latter. It was the responsibility of the state enterprise to organise practical training for the students and to provide the schools with equipment necessary for the training. The state enterprises had scope for continuing vocational education and training through the upgrading of qualification levels from categories 2 to 3 and 4 to 7. These together with vocational education and training institutions formed a clear system to meet the demands of the planned economy.

The recent educational reform in vocational education and training is aimed at making it viable and competitive in responding to the actual and perceived labour needs for a market economy. In order to achieve these aims the Ministry of Education, along with other interested ministries, initiated a series of measures for reforming vocational secondary education.

The educational policy of the state for secondary vocational education and training and the implementation strategy were formulated in the following documents:

- Concept of educational development in the Republic of Moldova (approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in 1994),
- Law on Education,
- National Programme of education development 1995-2005 (in conformity with the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova N.176/D from 01.06.1993), and
- State Programme of education development 1999-2005 (approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova N.984 from 26.1.1999).

In conformity with the educational policy and existing legal framework, vocational education and training management tasks consist of the following:

- modernisation of the structure and optimising the network;
- introduction of new vocations, updating of curriculum contents and development of new standards;
- involvement of employers and other key players in vocational education and training, planning, provision and assessment;
- diversification and consolidation of financial sources.

Structural reform in the country began with the introduction of new institutional forms - that of versatile vocational (versatile vocational education and training) schools of Step I, Step II and Step III, and the schools of trades. These new changes came about after an experimental phase set within the legal framework of the Decision of the Council, number 15 of 3 October 1995. Regulations for versatile vocational education and training (School and Regulations of the School of Trades) were proposed and adopted (Decision of the Council number 29 of 23 July 1996 and Decision of the Council number 34 of 24 December 1996, respectively). The Ministry of Education adopted the new structure following the Council's Decision number 35 of 3 July 1997 which was later confirmed by the Decision of the Government (number 795 of 20 August 1997).

The network of vocational education and training institutions was revised as part of the transition plan for new structures in accordance with the Education Law and the needs of the new counties (Judets). The term "transition to new structures" applies to the change of status of vocational education and training institutions which were defined by their programmes. Versatile vocational education and training schools (combining vocational education and training and general education) covering steps I and II were legalised by the Decision of the Government number 807 of 9 August 2000 - "Regarding the enrolment plan for 2000 in vocational secondary education and training institutions financed by the state budget".

There has been no change in the number of vocational education and training institutions in the past few years. Moldova has one versatile vocational education and training school covering Steps I to III, 52 versatile vocational education and training schools covering Steps I and II, and 18 schools of trades. Groups of trades have been organised in all versatile vocational education and training schools. This allows for a greater flexibility in training people for various levels of qualification to meet local needs.

Curricula reform has been established and approved for the versatile vocational schools (Council's Decision number 15 of 3 October 1995). Typical transitional curricula for the schools of trades were approved by ministerial Council Decision number 29 of 23 July1996.

3.2 *Responsible bodies, including social partners*

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the general management of the educational system. For vocational education and training, higher education, post-university education, adult education, upgrading and re-qualification, the Ministry co-ordinates these activities with other ministries. The Ministry of Education's other responsibilities include:

- educational strategy including the continuous development of the technical and material needs of vocational education and training;
- developing the state standards and their implementation;

- developing assessment criteria and assessing vocational education and training institutions;
- defining in co-operation with other ministries, departments, local authorities, the network of vocational education and training institutions;
- participating in enrolment plans for the institutions and developing the teaching list of vocations and trades;
- assessing the vocational education and training institutions and issuing licences to new vocational education and training institutions;
- evaluating the teaching personnel and organising upgrading and re-qualification;
- co-ordinating the financial activities of vocational education and training;
- issuing regulations on the activities of vocational education and training institutions;
- nominating directors for the vocational education and training institutions.

The Ministry of Education comprises departments, directorates, and sections. Vocational education and training is the responsibility of the principal Directorate of secondary professional education.

The Ministry of Economy proposes the listing of the trades to be taught in vocational education and training institutions, defines the enrolment plan for secondary vocational education and training and higher education, based on the current and medium term needs of the national economy.

Decentralisation of vocational education and training was implemented following local and regional government reform. As a result, all versatile vocational education and training schools and schools of trades from Lapusna and Ungheni counties were transferred to local public administration bodies.

There is now a possibility that all secondary vocational education and training institutions may transfer to local authorities except for specialised ones such as those relating to the printing industry, radio-electronics, metal processing, etc. This would optimise the co-ordination of activities among vocational education and training institutions and local labour offices, subdivisions of the Ministries of Finance, Economy and Labour and Social Protection.

3.3 *Financing vocational education and training*

In 1999, the focus was on vocational education and training financing in the Tacis-supported project "Vocational education and training reform in the Republic of Moldova". A working group was created with representatives from various ministries (Education, Finance, Economy), the Employers' Association and foreign experts to work on recommendations.

The state budget is the main financial source for vocational education and training. It is allocated on the basis of a costs breakdown approved by the Ministry of Education although not all budget requests are financed. In recent years the Ministry has only covered maintenance, wages, and student allowances. There was no fund for upgrading technical and material resources or the procurement of raw materials. All vocational education and training institution have their own bank account as well as one or several extra-budgetary accounts for income-generating activities.

Vocational education and training share of public expenditure on education increased slightly from 6.2 per cent in 1996 to 7.1 per cent in 1999. (In 1992 it was 15.3 per cent.) This was 38 million lei or 0.65 per cent of the 1999 gross domestic product. Apart from vocational education and training schools from the Ungheni and Hincesti districts now under the local public authorities, all other vocational

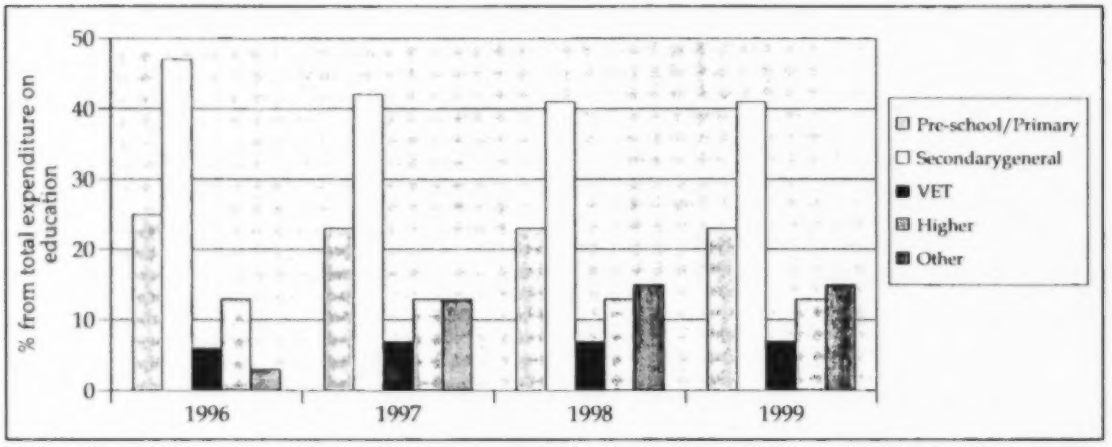
education and training institutions are financed by the Ministry of Education which exerts a tighter control on them than on other areas of education.

Table 12: Breakdown of current public expenditure on education by educational levels

	Total, million lei	Pre-school/ Primary, %	Secondary general, %	Vocational education and training, %	Higher, %	Other, %
1996	769	24.5	46.8	6.2	13.3	3
1997	897.9	23.4	41.7	6.6	13.4	13.4
1998	640.9	23.4	40.7	7.1	13.2	14.5
1999	574.4	23.4	40.7	7.1	13.2	14.5

Source: Department of Statistics and Social Analyses

Fig. 8: Breakdown of current public expenditure on education by educational levels,1996-1999



The other main legal extra-budgetary sources currently used by the vocational education and training schools include:

- Provision of vocational education and training services on a contractual basis (contracts between schools and enterprises or, more often, with physical persons);
- Income from the practical work of students at enterprises (various schemes are involved and conditions negotiated by the vocational education and training school with the particular enterprise; students are usually paid some money);
- Income generated by vocational education and training schools through the provision of services, particularly in agricultural areas;
- Income from renting out premises, sometimes on a contractual basis, particularly in cities. Vocational education and training schools have been able to rent out their hostels as office premises due to the drop in student numbers in recent years (see also 4.1.17).

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Although the 1995 Law on Education imposed a 2 per cent levy on employers towards vocational education and training this has not been implemented. It is also unclear how this funding would have been allocated if available. It is likely that no additional funding would be available from this source for vocational education and training since financing decisions are made by the Ministry of Finance.

The vocational education and training reform project recommended the following:

- Vocational education and training schools should be decentralised and subject to free-market principles. Decentralisation should result in financial autonomy for the vocational education and training schools. These schools should be responsible for state funds and their own commercial initiatives. The Ministry of Education would be able to oversee the schools through the latter's annual audit.
- The activities of decentralised vocational education and training schools should be co-ordinated by tripartite bodies, involving all local stakeholders. The co-ordinating body would be responsible for a balanced annual budget, approve expenditure, and define the priorities.
- The state should transfer all assets such as premises, land, equipment, tools, small enterprises to the schools. Local industries are reluctant to invest in vocational education and training as they consider there is too much state interference and the status of school property remains unclear.
- Strong support should be given to the commercial activities of the schools and these activities should be tax-free. In addition, the Ministry of Education should refrain from using the schools' funds raised from these commercial activities for the total operating costs of the schools.

However not all of these recommendations are easily implemented.

- Decentralisation, involving the transfer of vocational education and training schools to local government budgets, has been initiated in two regions. But the results have been more negative than positive as concerns that local authorities might misuse the school buildings and material resources have been confirmed. The new Parliament elected in early 2001 is planning to reverse local government reform and it is likely that the previous structure will be restored. This will inevitably lead to a new round of centralisation in many fields including education.
- Social partnership on a local level is still underdeveloped and further efforts are needed to involve local stakeholders in vocational education and training issues.
- The current legal framework does not stipulate that all property can be transferred to the schools and the status of these institutions as property owners is unclear.
- The commercial activities of the schools have proved more successful than anticipated but results depend heavily on "initial conditions" such as the location of the school, agricultural land, equipment, qualified personnel, etc. Increased efforts in developing the schools' commercial activities are likely to improve their financial resources.

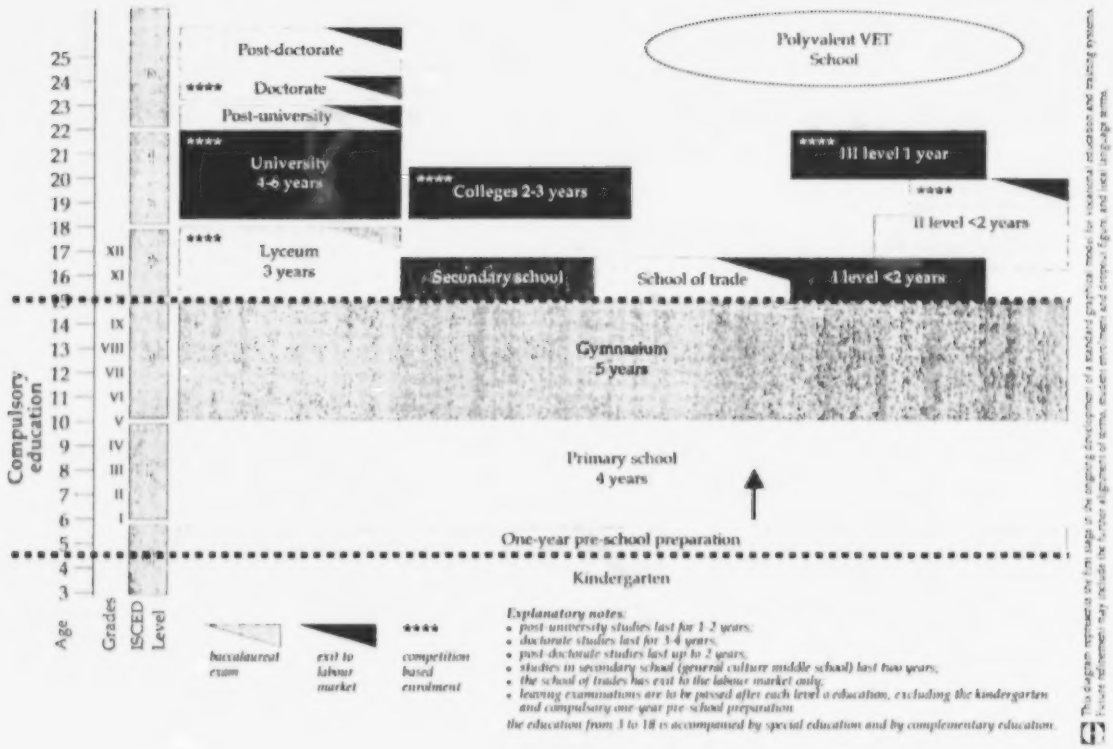
The changes in recent years have removed most of the unproductive costs in maintaining these schools. Meters monitoring consumption of electricity, water, heating, etc, have been installed in school buildings and hostels.

Student hostels continue to be a heavy financial burden on the schools for several reasons. Firstly, there are high electricity bills because of inefficient heating systems and the lack of kitchens in the hostels. Secondly, a large number of people unrelated to any activity on vocational education and training schools live in the hostels because of the accommodation shortage. Often these people have accumulated large debts for various services and there is no clear scheme on how the schools can retrieve the money. Thus, the next measure to improve the financial situation of vocational education and training schools should be to unburden the schools of the hostels and either transfer the hostels to the respective local municipality or privatise them.

In recent years students in state and private universities have had to pay increasing levels of fees. Universities have been very successful in marketing their educational services since there is an increasing demand for higher education. Several experts, particularly those representing the ministries responsible for the paring the state budget, have demanded a similar fee-paying system for vocational education and training schools.

However, the opponents of this view hold that this is socially unfair as vocational education and training students are often from families with modest income who would not be able to afford the fees. Vocational education and training students are usually under 19 - the same age as lyceum pupils who do not have to pay for their education. It would thus be unfair to impose fees on vocational education and training students and not on lyceum students simply because the former prefer a more rapid entry into the labour market.

Chapter 4. The vocational education and training system


Post-doctorate
Doctorate
Post-university
University 4-6 years
Colleges 2-3 years
Polyvalent VET School
III level 1 year
II level <2 years
Lyceum 3 years
Secondary school
School of trade
I level <2 years
Gymnasium 5 years
Primary school 4 years
One-year pre-school preparation
Kindergarten
Compulsory education
Age
Grades
ISCED Level
baccalaureat exam
exit to labour market
competition based enrolment
Explanatory notes:
post-university studies last for 1-2 years;
doctorate studies last for 3-4 years;
post-doctorate studies last up to 2 years;
studies in secondary school (general culture middle school) last two years;
the school of trades has exit to the labour market only;
leaving examinations are to be passed after each level o education, excluding the kindergarten and compulsory one-year pre-school preparation
the education from 3 to 18 is accompanied by special education and by complementary education.

4.1 *Initial vocational education*

Initial vocational education and training is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The early grades of primary school involve education and training in simple work with painting, art and handicraft. In the lower secondary schools, students have, apart from academic and art subjects, technical lessons and practical training in school workshops.

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Table 13: Structure of school system by type of schools - number of units

	Primary schools	Gymnasiums	Lyceums	General culture secondary schools	Special schools	Vocational education and training schools
1997/1998	98	614	77	705	42	80
1998/1999	107	631	143	625	43	87
1999/2000	113	650	153	601	41	81

Source: Data of the Ministry of Education

Initial vocational education and training for students who have left gymnasium, lyceum or general secondary school are available in two types of secondary vocational education and training institutions: school of trades, and versatile vocational school *(scoala profesionala polivalenta)*. Vocational secondary education encompasses training in a trade (profession), as well as improving and retraining of qualified workers and the unemployed.

Simple vocational qualifications are also available from various courses offered by state or private training providers. In some cases this training may be free of charge (for example, in agriculture some courses are organised by the Ministry of Agriculture) but in the majority of courses a fee is charged.

The school of trades provides professional (vocational) training in one or some related trades. Graduates of gymnasiums, lyceums and general culture middle schools can enrol in these schools. Special groups can also be formed with the approval of the Ministry of Education for pupils who did not complete nine grades but are already 16 years old. The studies are from 6 to 18 months and end with an examination. Those who pass are awarded a school-of-trades certificate.

Polyvalent (versatile) vocational school (versatile vocational and education training school) is organised in three steps. It provides successive training in a large range of qualifications - from a simple worker to a technician. In these schools gymnasium graduates take 5 years to complete their studies and lyceum and general culture middle school graduates take 3 years. The latter are in a special quicker programme than gymnasium graduates. Each of the first two steps for the versatile vocational school lasts two years. The following are the amendments to the Education Law introduced by Parliament:

- Step I of the versatile vocational education and training school provides training in a qualified worker trade where a Versatile Vocational Education and Training I certificate is awarded. This allows the holder to enter the labour market or to continue to the second step of the versatile vocational school.
- Step II provides extensions of qualifications to that of a foreman (*maistru*), and professional initiation in managing a private business. The second step ends with an examination for the Versatile Vocational Education and Training II certificate. This again allows the holder to enter the labour market or continue to the third step.
- Vocational training in Step III ends with the qualification of a technician (technologist) and a diploma is awarded for those who pass the examination.
- The lyceum education provided by the versatile vocational education and training schools is regulated by the provisions for general education. This ends after Step II of the versatile

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vocational education and training (the first version of the Education Law would have continued the lyceum education to the end of Step III for versatile vocational education and training schools). The graduates can take the baccalaureate examinations if they wish which would lead to a baccalaureate diploma and access to a higher educational institution.

Enrolment in the versatile vocational education and training schools is competitive and based on an examination as it follows the enrolment regulations for lyceums. This is a problem for vocational schools as the lyceums have a predominantly academic orientation and its curriculum is either too difficult or unattractive for the practice-oriented potential students of vocational training interested in quick access to the labour market. These two factors have deterred the number of possible students for the full-term versatile vocational education and training programmes. Some of the interested applicants are unable to pass the entrance examinations because of the academic content and others leave the programme after Step I.

Experience gathered from recent years reveals that about 60 per cent of the Step I versatile vocational education and training school students prefer to look for work with a basic certificate rather than improve their qualification by continuing to Step II. The general education of vocational education and training gained during the two years is thus incomplete. And taking into account that general subjects occupy more than 50 per cent of the timetable it would appear that the curriculum does not give the best result.

In 2000, by an amendment to the Law on Education, lyceum education was compressed into the first two steps of the versatile vocational education and training schools. But this is only a partial solution to the problem. Continuing discussions suggest that an optimal solution would be to increase Step I of versatile vocational education and training school from two to three years. The general education component should be organised on the basis of technical (vocational)-based lyceum and finalised after Step I with optional baccalaureate examinations. Within these conditions it would be possible to reduce Step II to one year from two years and so keeping the first two steps of versatile vocational education and training school at four years as in the original length of study.

The main difference between the schools of trades and versatile vocational education schools is that the former is oriented towards specific occupations. It is meant for those interested in getting a vocational qualification in one or some form of closed trades so as to find work as soon as possible (see also 4.1.3).

Two related disadvantages of the schools of trades are the low level of general education and vocational skills acquired in these short programmes and reduced future professional mobility. Gymnasium graduates who are 15 or 16 years old before the enrolment will be only 16 or 17 years old at the end of the training. Their age and the lack of professional experience make it difficult for them to find work as many trades have age restrictions. There is also limited social protection for them.

A third drawback of the schools of trades is that their vocational education and training programmes attract few leavers of upper secondary education (lyceums or general culture secondary schools) for two reasons. Firstly, their students will take longer for the equivalent vocational qualifications than gymnasium leavers. The latter will receive their certificate between the age of 16 and 16½ while leavers of general culture secondary schools/lyceums will receive the same certificate between the age of 17½ and 18½. Secondly, the list of trades taught has not changed significantly to take into account the current needs of the labour market. In short, most of the trades taught are for industries that have been declining in the last ten years.

Issues on enrolment in the current vocational education and training programmes are a matter of central planning and unrelated to demand. Those responsible for decisions are representatives from the vocational education and training schools and the Ministries of Education, Economy and

Finance who pursue different agendas. Vocational education and training schools aim at maximising state funding by getting the highest possible enrolment figures. The Ministry of Education is generally interested in an even distribution of funds for all institutions under its responsibility. The Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance are keen on pruning expenditure because of the constraints of an austerity budget.

In keeping with its view, the Ministry of Education is interested in increasing enrolment for gymnasium leavers in the "long-term" Step I versatile vocational education and training programmes or the "relatively long-term" school-of-trades training programmes. Short-term training programmes for leavers of lyceums or general secondary schools are less attractive for vocational education and training schools and the Ministry of Education for the following two reasons.

- These programmes reduce state funding for vocational education and training schools.
- They are unpopular with potential applicants as the latter prefer higher education to further their education which leaves many vacancies in the programmes and gives other Ministries an excuse to further cut the funds allocated to vocational education and training programmes.

This conflict among ministries has caused a considerable drop in the number of vocational education and training students. The number of entrants has not been significantly affected but the courses have been considerably shortened by the vocational education and training schools' offer of short-term "school-of-trades" type vocational education and training programmes for graduates of the 11th and 12th classes and gymnasium leavers. Additionally, fewer funds have been allocated for Step II of the versatile vocational education and training school programmes for those who have completed Step I.

In our view, the long-term effects of the above recourse, i.e. that it reduces access to vocational education and training for those who need it most and is an obstacle to developing the country's human resources, far outweigh any short-term economic merit.

4.2 *Continuing vocational training*

Moldova shares the same problems as many other countries in the need to keep in pace with dynamic economic changes affecting the nature of work and changes in the labour market. Continuing vocational training is thus crucial to the country as its people need to continuously retrain or upgrade skills and knowledge.

Continuing vocational training however does not come under any specific legislation. Most regulations relating to continuing education can be found in laws or Government Decisions on social security, social protection, retraining of the unemployed, upgrading of the employed, and adult education.

A series of provisions on continuing vocational training for employees are included in the Collective Agreement on Labour. The main provision deals with the obligation of the employers to allocate at least 2 per cent of the salary fund for vocational training, upgrading and re-training of the employees. There is also a provision whereby the management has to give at least two months' notice of redundancy to employees to allow them time for retraining for new employment.

Moldova has public and private providers of continuing vocational training.

Public continuing vocational training providers include:

- those educational institutions attached to the Ministry of Education: schools of trades, versatile vocational schools, colleges, universities, institutes, academies;
- those educational institutions attached to the Ministry of Agriculture: courses for initial training and adult training, mainly in mechanisation;
- those educational institutions attached to other ministries: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of National Defence;
- those institutions attached to other public bodies.

Private continuing vocational training providers cover a wide spectrum from private educational institutions, professional associations, companies, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, specialised groups of employers, non-governmental organisations, etc. The continuing vocational training market is highly competitive and expanding.

Vocational training and retraining of the unemployed is co-ordinated at the national level by the Department of Employment of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. A national network of labour offices covering all local government areas was established with the support of Tacis. The labour offices organise local level training courses for the unemployed (See Table 14 and Fig. 9), keep a register of the unemployed and of job vacancies.

Table 14: Vocational training of the unemployed, year 2000

	Enrolled in different courses	Have been trained	Of which received their first training	Retrained	Upgraded their skills
Total	6383	5253	3635	1497	121
Of which: women	4590	3801	2577	1117	107
In companies/organisations	548	426	332	93	1
In vocational education and training schools	1719	1540	1003	534	3
In colleges	199	97	86	11	0
In higher education institutions	273	187	75	109	3
In other institutions	3644	3003	2139	750	114

Source: Data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Department of Employment

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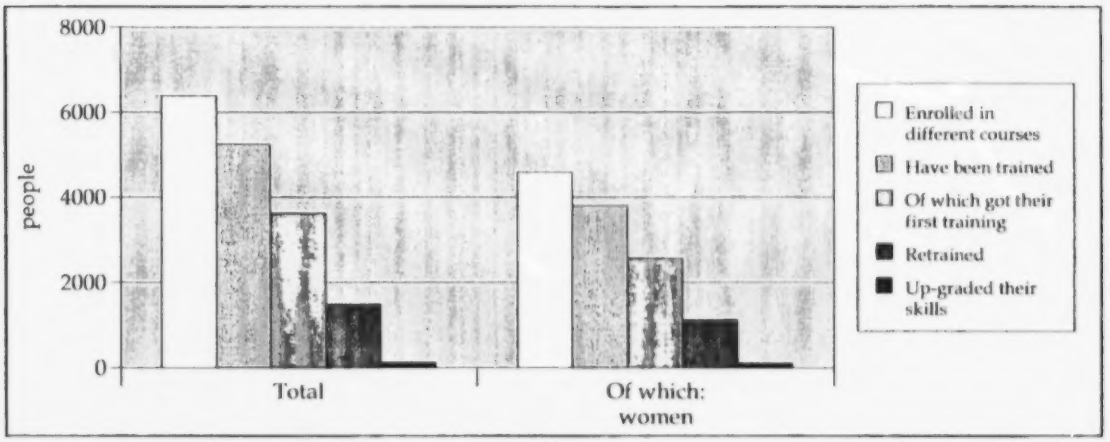
Fig. 9: Vocational training for the unemployed in 2000



The occupations for which the unemployed are trained or retrained are based on the preferences of the recipients, with the proviso that the local Labour Office is able to find training providers for the course in that particular locality. The most popular trades are those which offer self-employment at the end of a course (such as for tailors), followed by construction, public catering, information technology, etc.

Often the adults' choice of further education is influenced by the labour market. This is particularly the case in the capital where the demand for new skills is relatively high with a wide range of training providers. Language courses (English, German, Spanish) are as popular as courses on information technology, accounting, etc. Most people pay for the courses themselves.

This applies equally to those attending courses that would help in getting jobs abroad. Legal and illegal migration of the labour force is common in the country. Among the most popular destinations for migrant workers are the southern Schengen countries, Russia, Israel and Ukraine. Building on the experiences of earlier migrants working in the respective countries, those who intend to work abroad temporarily attend courses to gain the required skills.

In recent years various training providers have been successful in organising in-service training for company employees. Joint ventures in particular contract state-owned or private vocational education and training institutions or higher education institutions for the training of their employees.

4.3 *Training of teachers and trainers*

Teacher training for vocational education and training schools is weak in Moldova as until recently there was no educational institution specialising in it. However, courses have recently been organised at the Technical University of Moldova. Often teachers at vocational education and training schools are graduates of technical higher education institutions who have had only short-term pedagogical training before teaching. Or they may be university graduates who teach general culture subjects at versatile vocational education and training schools.

Currently, the staff of vocational education and training institutions are confronted with such difficulties as low salaries and a poor working environment. For example, some vocational education and training schools do not have heating in the winter and have to close down in the

harsh winter periods. Given these problems, few young people are attracted to the job. Thus the average age of vocational education and training teachers is higher than those in general education. And, as in general education, some of the teachers are of retirement age.

Some progress was made when the Teacher Training, Curriculum Development and Secondary Vocational Education and Training Assessment Department was created within the framework of the Tacis project "Support for vocational education and training reform". In the early months of its establishment the Department participated in teacher retraining programmes, development of vocational education and training standards, etc.

At present the Department acts as a subdivision of the Technical University of Moldova. However it is not an effective department because of poor financial and human resources. Its legal status is unclear and it urgently needs support from the Ministry of Education particularly in further training for its staff.

Some support has been given by international donor organisations. In the last three years, the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) has helped in organising permanent training workshops for vocational education and training teachers and instructors in construction, metal processing, food processing, agriculture, etc.

The authors hold that there should be a scheme for training and retraining vocational education and training teachers similar to those for higher education institutions. International co-operation would be necessary for training and retraining trainers in expertise lacking in Moldova.

Chapter 5. Anticipation of skill needs and standards

5.1 *Skill needs and standards*

Determining skill needs and developing standards in vocational education and training are relatively new activities for those responsible for the national vocational education and training system in the country. These were the prerogatives of the central authorities in Moscow when Moldova was part of the Soviet Union. As such Moldova has little experience in setting up adequate and effective measures. The importance of international assistance and co-operation in these areas cannot be underestimated.

Some Moldovan institutions including the Ministry of Education, vocational education and training schools, the Teacher Training, Curriculum Development and Vocational Education and Training Assessment Department have gained valuable experience in determining skill needs and developing standards. Technical support was provided by the European Training Foundation, AMUGrupen/Amu International (Sweden), German Foundation for International Development (DSE) and the European Consortium AMU/NEHEM/ATC which were responsible for implementing the Tacis-funded project "Support for vocational education and training reform in the Republic of Moldova".

Certain features of skill needs determination and vocational education and training standards development in Moldova should be noted.

A) The content of vocational education and training is largely the responsibility of vocational education and training providers. In most cases, as with vocational education and training schools, they follow developments in the labour market and initiate changes in vocational education and training standards. Various short-term programmes are proposed and developed by private educational providers. The absence of a strict national policy in vocational education and training standards is a serious obstacle to maintaining a high standard in vocational education and training. Study programmes by state or private institutions are subject to approval by the Ministry of Education. However, there has been no assessment of the programmes by experts despite approval by the Ministry.

B) Social partners in vocational education and training still play an insignificant role in standards development. At best co-operation with employers involves only communication with representatives of vocational education and training schools interested in the new labour standards, occupations, technologies, etc.

C) With few exceptions, trade unions in Moldova are still at the developing stage. Most focus their attention on economic issues only and show little interest in related issues such as vocational education and training.

Discussions are continuing between various vocational education and training stakeholders on occupational standards and vocational education and training standards. Experts at the Ministry of

Education have a broad vision of vocational education and training as encompassing occupational areas with specialisation of some occupation-based trades. However, the Ministry of Economy insists on a more simple "occupation" approach which in their view could economise on funding for vocational education and training.

5.2 *Curriculum development*

There are four main forms of secondary vocational education and training curricula for the two categories of vocational education and training entrants: those who leave lower secondary education after grade 9, and those who leave upper secondary education after grade 11 or 12. Students can choose the versatile vocational education and training school or the school of trades. Duration of schooling in each type of vocational education and training school depends on previous education. Hence, there are two vocational education and training curricula for the versatile vocational schools and two for the schools of trades.

A typical curriculum for versatile vocational education and training schools consists of:

- description of the occupational profile;
- study plan;
- description of assessment procedures;
- procedure and conditions of enrolment in the given programme.

Vocational education and training standards are developed and revised by the teachers and trainers of vocational education and training institutions subject to approval by the Ministry of Education. It should be noted that these activities are sporadic since the Ministry of Education is short on funds and expertise.

Social partners are involved in vocational education and training standard development through participation in formal or informal questionnaires conducted by the vocational education and training schools.

Feedback from the labour market is collected from various externally supported projects. The questionnaire format is a relatively new methodology for the country and as can be expected there is some reluctance by Moldovans to participate. Those involved in collecting data often need training and mediation before and during the project period.

Communication between vocational education and training school representatives and social partners is also aimed at sharing information on a broad range of common interests: skills to be developed, practical training for students, provision of labour by schools at critical periods. For example, vocational education and training schools can help provide needed labour at peak seasons in the food processing industry.

Some companies in the manufacturing, service and construction sectors show more interest in the vocational education and training standards of adults. Vocational education and training for adults are generally short-term modular courses relating to the needs of the employers.

All vocational education and training curricula cover the same general education subjects and allocate an equal amount of time for them as they would the vocational subjects. The Teacher Training, Curriculum Development and Secondary Vocational Education and Training Assessment Department (Technical University of Moldova) and the Agrarian University have been working on vocational education and training model curricula.

Generally, the special subject component of most vocational education and training institutions remains unchanged. Some institutions have made changes to include new trades after investigating labour market requirements.

A typical curriculum for the school of trades consists of:

- special and vocational training components
- basic scientific education component (applied general education subjects)

Curricula development and revision are at the same stage as versatile vocational education and training schools' skill needs determination and standard development.

Students are assessed at the end of Steps I and II of the versatile vocational education and training school or at the end of the school of trades programme. The objectives of the assessment are to:

- ensure completion of the technical training;
- ensure high standards in labour procedures;
- ensure the maintenance of national technical standards;
- ensure the adherence to labour safety rules.

Assessment of students is undertaken by a mixed Commission approved by the Ministry of Education. The members of the Commission are:

- the head of the commission – the representative of the branch enterprises (state or private);
- teachers and instructors from the school;
- at the request of employers, other people can be included in the commission if the examinations are used for recruiting employees.

Assessment of students comprises the following:

- written work (calculations, description of technological processes, etc.);
- presentation (development of technical documentation, projection of the article, of sets, subsets, details, etc.);
- practical work (completed fully).

The practical part of the assessment has to be preceded by the following activities:

- a market survey by the student for the current market requirements;
- contacting employers for their specific needs;
- selection of a topic relating to personal qualification and ambition (self-assessment is of major importance).

5.3 *Research*

Research on short and particularly long-term vocational education and training and the labour market are still inadequate in Moldova. The Institute of Pedagogical and Psychological Sciences closed in 1999 and its responsibilities were transferred to the Institute of Educational Sciences. The latter was was organised along the lines of the former Institute of In-service Training of Pedagogical Cadres. This institution, however, has more expertise in general education issues but research on vocational education and training heads its constitution.

It should be noted that the Tacis-funded project on "Support for vocational education and training reform in the Republic of Moldova" led to the creation of the Teacher Training, Curriculum Development and Secondary Vocational Education and Training Assessment Department based at the Technical University of Moldova. It has a permanent staff of 10 experts and relatively adequate technical equipment provision. But the legal status of this institution is unclear. However, some of its most important scientific activities include a series of publications and manuals edited and printed exclusively with the support of Tacis.

The National Observatory of Moldova has been able to provide some expertise for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection because of its location in the Ministry of Education and its networking capacity. A system of key indicators and performance indicators for vocational education and training institutions proposed by the National Observatory was accepted as the official key indicators of the Ministry of Education. The National Observatory also contributed to the country's classification of educational programmes in conformity with ISCED 1997.

The following projects were initiated and implemented either by the National Observatory or with its participation:

- Development of a vocational education and training standard for a Baker-entrepreneur;
- 1998 National Human Development Report – Republic of Moldova;
- The 1999 sub-regional seminar "Education and Labour Market in Transitional Period" – in co-operation with the National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) of the Republic of Moldova;
- Development of a vocational education and training standard in wood processing;
- Labour market analysis and vocational training in Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.

Annexes

Annex 1: Bilateral and multilateral donors' activities in vocational education and training

Deutsche Stiftung für Internazionale Entwiklung (DSE)- technical assistance in upgrading management personnel from vocational education and training schools. Activities - a series of seminars, both in Germany and in Moldova, organised between 1996 and 1999.

1. Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) - technical assistance in modular training and curriculum development
2. Technical support from European Training Foundation, AMUGrupen/Amu International (Sweden), German Foundation for International Development (DSE), European Consortium AMU/NEHEM/ATC which were responsible for the implementation of the Tacis -funded project "Support for vocational education and training reform in the Republic of Moldova".

Annex 2: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

DLFU	=	Department of Labour Force Utilisation (Department of Employment)
DSS	=	Department of Statistics and Sociology
ETF	=	European Training Foundation
GRM	=	Government of the Republic of Moldova
HLFS	=	Household Labour Force Survey
ILO	=	International Labour Organisation
MoE	=	Ministry of Education
ME	=	Ministry of Economy
MLSP	=	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NOb	=	National Observatory
WB	=	World Bank

Annex 3: Glossary of Terms

School of Trades. Occupationally-oriented institution of secondary vocational education and training in Moldova without awards of general secondary education certificate.

Versatile vocational educational and training school. This is an institution for secondary vocational education and training in Moldova which offers general education alongside vocational education and training and optional baccalaureate examinations. It awards certificates in a vocation.

Vocational education and training. The literal English translation of the term "vocational education and training" in Moldova is "secondary professional (vocational) education". It denotes that part of the national educational system which begins after lower secondary and comprises the vocational education and training programmes offered by the Schools of Trades and the three steps of the Versatile Vocational Education and Training schools.

Annex 4: Major organisations

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Annex 5: Bibliography

1. Moldovan Economic Trends. Quarterly issue. October-December 1999.
2. Moldovan Economic Trends. Quarterly issue. January-March 2000.
3. Moldovan Economic Trends. Quarterly issue. April-June 2000.
4. Moldova XXI. Srategia Nationala pentru dezvoltare durabila.
5. The European Union and the Republic of Moldova. Implementing the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement. 1999.

Annex 6: List of In-depth studies

1. Social Partnership in the Republic of Moldova
2. The Market of Labour Force of Moldova
3. Financing of Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Moldova
4. Vocational Education and Training reform in some Central European and Eastern European countries
5. Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses in the Republic of Moldova

Annex 7: Recent vocational education and training related legislation

Nr.279-XIV, 11.02.99	Law on the Youth
Nr.393-XIV, 13.05.99	Law on the Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Nr.423-XIV, 04.06.99	Law on the Regulations for Accrediting and Assessment of Educational Institutions
Nr.489-XIV, 08.07.99	Law on the Public System of Social Insurance
Nr.523-XIV, 16.07.99	Law on the Public Property of the Territorial Administrative Units
Nr.328-XIV, 24.03.99	Law on the modification and completing the Law on Education and the law on Accrediting and Assessment Educational Institutions in the Republic of Moldova
Nr.552-XIV, 28.07.99	Law on the modification, completing and abrogation of some legislative acts (..., Law on Education,...)

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